

West LRT moving forward on schedule

A station-by-station update on \$700-million project

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Despite suggestions that its 2012 deadline was short-sighted and impossible to meet, construction of Calgary's West LRT project is proceeding on time and even under budget.

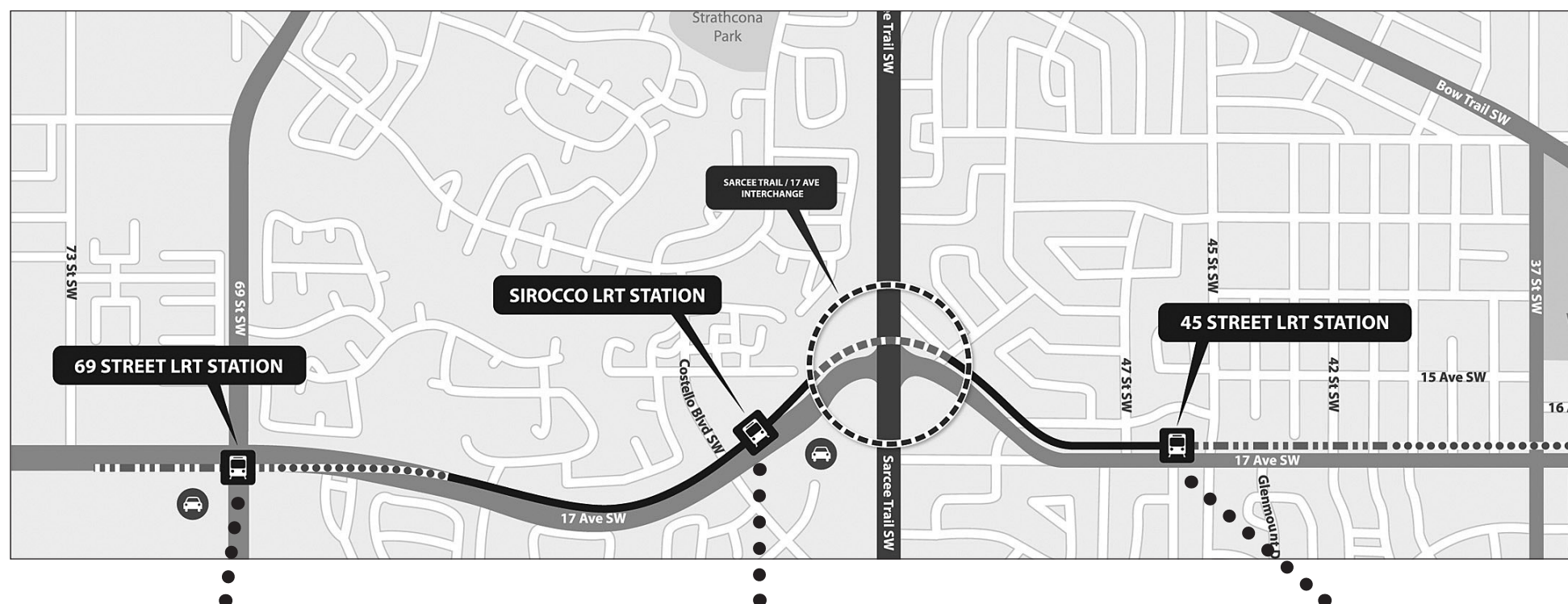
The \$700-million line, which will see six stations – including the city's first elevated and underground stations – and eight kilometres of track built from downtown to Strathcona Park at 69th Street and 17th Avenue S.W., has already hit several important milestones in its construction timeline, most notably the installation of the launching truss, which will be used to raise the concrete pieces of the elevated track over Shaw Millennium Park.

At the site of the launching truss last month, during which the first section of the elevated

track was lifted into place, Mayor Dave Bronconnier described the project as “moving forward at lightning speed.”

Although other C-Train projects are in the planning stages and nearing construction – including the Martindale and Saddletowne stations on the northeast line for 2011, and a station in Tuscany at the end of the northwest line set for completion by 2014 – the West LRT and its due date of December 2012 is the most high profile transit project currently underway, and is causing the most attention due to numerous road closures, rerouting and large-scale construction.

Here's what's been completed so far for the West LRT, and what Calgarians can expect in the months ahead.



The end of the West LRT line will be in a trench on the south side of 17th Avenue; the train will travel through a brief underground tunnel between Sirocco Station and 69th Street Station, underneath 17th Avenue.

The station will be adjacent to a four-level, 800-stall parkade, as well as the future West Calgary High School, which will replace Earnest Manning High School. The facility is on track for completion before September 2011, when it is set to open for the next school year. Also being moved to accommodate the station is Westside Recreation Centre's skateboard park and basketball courts, which has been moved from the north side of the building to the south side and is expected to reopen at the end of this year.

A temporary bridge has been put into place for traffic on westbound 17th Avenue between Christie Park Gate and 69th Street, to allow construction crews to continue the excavation of the LRT tunnel. The bridge will be in place until late 2010. Additionally, between 69th Street and 73rd Street, traffic will be reduced to one lane on 17th Avenue going both east and west.

Upon heading out of the trench and back to ground level at 47th Street S.W., the westbound train will hit another elevated track that will carry passengers over Sarcee Trail, coming back to ground level immediately afterwards. The building of this exchange is being coupled with the excavation and construction of the new Sarcee Trail/17th Avenue interchange, allowing 17th Avenue to continue west through and beyond Sarcee Trail where before it simply stopped dead.

While this interchange is being built, 17th Avenue has been realigned between Sarcee Trail and Glenside Drive to accommodate the work. This realignment will last until September 2011.

Sirocco Station will be located on the north side of 17th Avenue, east of Costello Boulevard. The station will be ground level and within walking distance of West Market Square, as well as a 450-stall Park and Ride lot and bus lot, which is already open. The Park and Ride is also the temporary location of the 69th Street bus terminal, as its permanent location is currently being constructed.

After emerging from underground, the next stop on the West LRT will be at 45th Street and 17th Avenue S.W., in front of the Alberta Motor Association building. The station will be in a trench on the north side of 17th Avenue, so the street does not have to be widened in order to accommodate the station and track.

However, this means much excavation work is under way, so access to 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Streets from 17th Avenue has been closed. New crosswalks will be built that will travel over the trench to 17th Avenue.

The left turn bays have been removed along 17th Avenue between 35th Street and 39th Street, which leaves two eastbound lanes and two westbound lanes open. Although left turns are still permitted, major delays can be expected due to these removals.



From left: crews have already excavated 220,000 cubic metres and dug 12 metres deep for the future underground Westbrook Station; the launching truss began lifting sections of the elevated track at Shaw Millennium Park last month.

Photos: Sean-Paul Boynton/
Calgary Journal



Image courtesy of City of Calgary

Calgary's first underground station will be located just south of Westbrook Mall, allowing shoppers quick access to the station by walking from the mall to a spruced-up plaza area, where two points of access will be available. Construction crews are currently hard at work digging the station area and tunnel.

Bus access will also be available from the plaza, including shuttle service to and from Mount Royal University. Westbrook Station will mark the closest an LRT station has come to the school, about 10 minutes away.

The eventual route will see trains go underground at Bow Trail and 31st Street S.W. and come back up to ground level at 17th Avenue and 38th Street S.W.

Until October 2010, 33rd Street south of Bow Trail will be closed to accommodate construction. Access to Westbrook Mall will still be available coming from 17th Avenue during that time. Additionally, access to 12th Avenue is permanently closed at 33rd Street. In order to build the underground tunnel leading southwest from Westbrook Station, access to 35th Street from 17th Avenue will be closed until November 2010.

The second stop on the West LRT out of downtown will be in the median of Bow Trail immediately next to the 26th Street S.W. intersection, which means Bow Trail is being widened to accommodate the station and track. Excavation work is already underway, and the pedestrian bridge at 24th Street S.W. has been removed to allow for construction (a new bridge will be built by the end of 2010 to replace it). Additionally, access to Bow Trail from 24th Street will be closed until late 2011.

Westbound Bow Trail has been reduced to two lanes to allow for the construction, which will last until fall of 2011. Also, access to 29th Street S.W. will be permanently closed to allow for construction.

When the station is completed and open, it will allow quick access to the Shaganappi Point Golf Course, which has recently been refurbished and reopened after having to be closed temporarily to allow for construction.

As the first elevated station in Calgary, the construction of Sunalta Station and the elevated track that leads to it from Seventh Avenue S.W. is one of the most complex and high-scale components of the entire West LRT project. Things are going smoothly, however, as the launching truss has been built and installed, and at least a dozen sections of what will be the track have been set into place. Soon they'll connect the stone pillars that lead over Bow Trail to the station, which is quickly being built across the road from the Greyhound Bus terminal beside the CP Rail tracks.

Once completed, a pedestrian bridge will lead directly from Sunalta Station to the Greyhound Bus terminal. On the other side, a plaza will be built below the station that will lead to Calgary Transit bus access. The overhead track will then continue along Bow Trail, until it descends under the Crowchild Trail overpasses to street level.